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CANTOR CALLS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY INTO TAXPAYER FUNDING OF UN ORGANIZATION

Policy paper highlights potential abuses by UNRWA

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Eric Cantor, Chairman of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, today released a policy paper on the recent controversy surrounding the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA is a temporary United Nations organization tasked with providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees. The organization was created more than 50 years ago with the intention of bettering the lives of these refugees. Unfortunately, it appears that camps under UNRWA's control have become launching pads for terrorist activity against civilian populations.

"Buildings and warehouses under UNRWA's supervision are allegedly being used as storage areas for Palestinian ammunition and counterfeit currency factories," Congressman Cantor said. "It is disturbing that millions upon millions of American taxpayer dollars are going to fund an organization that has allegedly looked the other way when terrorists operate under their supervision. The United States is currently engaged in a war against terrorism, and I stand behind President Bush in his vow to root out terrorists and the countries that harbor them. If terrorist activity is thriving under UNRWA's control, all U.S. funding from that organization must be withdrawn."

The full text of the paper is attached.

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TASK FORCE ON TERRORISM & UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

**U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515**

**ERIC CANTOR, Virginia
CHAIRMAN**

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The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) was founded in 1950 after the first Arab-Israeli War to assist and coordinate the actions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) with the actions of Palestinian refugees. The establishment of UNRWA was the result of the Arab world's botched attempt to destroy the newborn state of Israel and was intended to be a temporary solution to deal with displaced Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, over the last 50 years, UNRWA's assistance has not improved the quality of life of the Palestinian people. In fact, under UNRWA's control and supervision, the Palestinians have created an active and deadly terrorist regime.

At the time of UNRWA's creation, the West Bank was under the control of the Jordanians, and the Gaza Strip was under the control of the Egyptians. It was not until 1967, when Israel fought a defensive war against its Arab neighbors, that the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip fell under Israeli control. While UNRWA claims to only assist refugees who fled their homes to join Arab forces attacking Israel in 1948, it is evident by refugee rolls that this is not the case. Even though UNRWA counts nearly four million Palestinians as refugees, it is likely that many of their ancestors are not from the land that is now Israel.

Currently, 50 years after the temporary organization was created, UNRWA is still involved in the Middle East by wholly funding and largely administrating the West Bank refugee camps that are under Yasser Arafat's control. At the center of controversy today is the UNRWA-run camp of Jenin. This camp was the focal point of the latest Israeli attempt to destroy the terrorism infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli military has provided ample evidence that the Jenin camp is the central command for suicide bombers. The Palestinians seem to agree, as they refer to the Jenin camp as the "suicide capital" and continue to launch many attacks against Israeli civilians from the location.

This continued assault from the Jenin camp against the only democracy in the Middle East forces us to question the manner in which UNRWA is running its refugee camps. Many allegations of abuse by UNRWA staff and of UNRWA resources have surfaced around the Jenin refugee camp. In UNRWA-funded and staffed schools, Palestinian children are taught that "Palestine's" borders run from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. By failing to acknowledge the existence of Israel, UNWRA fosters hatred

in children toward the people of Israel and the belief that Israel has no right to exist. Furthermore, UNRWA hosts summer school training camps where young students are taught tactics that further the cause of the Intifada and the supposed honor of Martyrdom. Buildings and warehouses under UNRWA's supervision are allegedly being used as storage areas for Palestinian ammunition and counterfeit currency factories. It is even alleged that the extreme terrorist organization, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, openly controls the UNRWA workers' union. UNRWA denies that this occurs, but has not provided satisfactory evidence to the contrary.

In Jenin, and especially inside the refugee camp, an extensive infrastructure of terrorist organizations exists. All of these terrorist organizations are allegedly under the supervision of UNRWA. These terrorist organizations include Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Fatah and are responsible for launching homicide attacks into Israel. Internal Fatah documents are available which demonstrate that even among the Palestinians, Jenin is considered the suicide capital.

For example, a letter to a Fatah official contains the following statement:

“(Jenin refugee camp) is characterized by an exceptional presence of fighting men who take the initiative (on behalf of) the national activity. Nothing will beat them and nothing worries them. Therefore, they are ready for self-sacrifice with all the means. And therefore, it is not strange, that Jenin (has been termed) the suicide capital” (A'simat Al-Istashidin, in Arabic).

Furthermore, while UNWRA claims to be a humanitarian organization, it allows terrorist organizations in Jenin to use local civilians as human shields. While terrorists launch attacks against the Israeli army out of occupied houses and apartment buildings, UNWRA turns its head. When innocent civilians are caught in the crossfire, UNRWA allows the terrorists to create sympathy for the Palestinian cause, thus swaying the Israelis from responding to attacks. The terrorists have also rigged civilian houses in Jenin so that Israeli troops would be killed while hunting for terrorists. This despicable lack of consideration for human life, which UNWRA seems to condone by not stepping in, is only one of the weapons that the terrorist groups use against their own people and Israeli civilians. Where is UNRWA while this is taking place?

Even more disturbing is the amount of American taxpayer dollars that funds UNRWA and the fact that the State Department has requested \$30 million in additional aid for UNRWA this year. For Fiscal Year 2001, the United States voluntarily contributed an outrageous \$101 million above UN dues. Though a finalized amount has not yet been determined for UNWRA funding in Fiscal Year 2002, there have already been calls to further increase that funding.

UNRWA has one underlying failure that will continue to prevent it from ever truly assisting the Palestinian refugees. UNRWA believes that its mandate is not to assist the refugees out of these camps, but rather to assist their living in the camps. This faulty logic, similar to that of the welfare system in the United States before 1996, leads to generations after generations of refugees remaining in camps. This means that the little or no movement out of the camps prevents the refugees from ever bettering their lives. Part of the Palestinian's problems stem from their refugee status, so U.S. policy should enhance their lives and teach them skills so that they can abandon refugee life and live a normal life contributing to a peaceful society. Maintaining this “welfare” status quo is not helping anyone. Rather than continuing to fund this poorly mandated and misguided United Nations' program, Congress should begin a thorough review of UNRWA's practices. The American taxpayers deserve more responsible government actions.